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Tourism and sustainable development*

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The tourism industry, one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the global economy, has important economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. Its continuing growth has important implications for the achievement of sustainable development, particularly in small island developing States and tourist destinations with fragile ecological environments. The tourism industry encompasses a large number of different travel-related activities, including, *inter alia*, hospitality enterprises, souvenir and craft businesses, travel agencies, transport enterprises, tour operators and tourist guides. The demand for new forms of tourism is growing in many countries and presents new challenges for the tourism industry, national Governments and the international community.

2. The United Nations and its agencies have addressed the importance of tourism and sustainable development on various occasions. In 1997, the General Assembly at its special session to review the implementation of Agenda 21 (23–28 June 1997), noted the importance of tourism and requested the development of an action plan for tourism. More recently, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/40 of 30 July 1998, recommended that the General Assembly declare 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. It requested a report containing the programmes and activities undertaken by Governments and interested organizations during the year, an assessment of the results achieved in encouraging ecotourism in developing countries and recommendations to promote ecotourism within the framework of sustainable development.

3. The present report discusses the interrelated economic, social and environmental issues associated with tourism to arrive at policy options that may be dealt with in an integrated policy framework for the development of sustainable tourism.

II. Tourism and economic development

4. In recent decades, tourism in the global economy has grown rapidly, consistently outstripping annual growth rates for world gross national product (GNP), world merchandise exports and world trade in services. As a result, the share of international tourism in global economic activity has risen steadily: in 1997, global tourism activities accounted for about 1.5 per cent of world GNP, 8 per cent of world merchandise exports by value and 35 per cent of the value of world exports of services. One of the major economic impacts of this rapid expansion in international tourism has been significant employment creation: the hotel accommodation sector alone provided around 11.3 million jobs worldwide in 1995. International tourism is expected to continue to grow just as fast in coming decades, and forecasts indicate that the number of people travelling internationally will increase from 612 million in 1997 to about 1.6 billion by 2020, and that earnings from international tourism will rise from $443 billion in 1997 to more than $2 trillion by 2020.[1]

5. The global tourism sector is currently dominated by industrialized economies from which most of the world's tourism flows originate. However, while tourism demand of persons in many of these economies is levelling off, developing economies — particularly the more dynamic emerging economies — have been experiencing an increase in demand for travel, leading to rapid growth in intraregional travel. The economies of East Asia and the Pacific alone accounted for about 15 per cent of global tourist arrivals and nearly 19 per cent of tourist revenues in 1997, up from 11.2 and 14.6 per cent respectively in 1990.[1] Similarly, in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland have benefited from tourism development under a market economy.

6. A significant proportion of international tourism is intraregional in nature, accounting for roughly 82 per cent of the total in 1997. The geographical proximity of tourist destinations to the most important originating markets is an important factor determining successful exports of tourism services, as the cost of air transport represents a smaller share of overall tourism-related expenditure. However, the cost of air travel in general has declined, and this has facilitated the development of tourist packages to long-haul markets in some developing countries. Some of the new destinations, in particular in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa, are attracting higher income tourists and selling higher value-added services and products.[2]

7. Tourism is the only major sector in international trade in services in which developing countries have consistently had surpluses compared with the rest of the world. Between 1980 and 1996 their positive balance in the travel account rose from $4.6 billion to $65.9 billion, driven by the growth of inbound tourism to countries in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa. The distribution of tourism flows shows a high degree of concentration of arrivals and receipts among and within developing regions. In the Asia and Pacific region, for example, Singapore and Hong Kong, Province of China, together received more tourists and earned more from tourism in 1996 than Thailand, Indonesia and South Asia combined. Similarly, Africa, which received nearly three times as many tourist arrivals as Singapore in 1997, managed

to earn only about 8 per cent more from tourism than did Singapore.[1] However, despite the impressive overall expansion of their tourism receipts, developing countries accounted for less than 30 per cent of world tourism receipts in 1996.[2]

8. Although tourism activity consists of both domestic and international tourism, with domestic tourism accounting for approximately 80 per cent of all tourism activity, tourism development strategy typically places the primary emphasis upon international tourists, that is, leisure and business travellers crossing international frontiers. This emphasis on international tourism development, however, is understandable, since domestic tourism leads largely to a redistribution of national income while international tourism provides foreign exchange earnings to the destination country.

9. The tourism sector can be a major driving force for economic development in many developing countries because of its large potential multiplier and spillover effects on the rest of the economy. The sector tends to generate a large number of jobs, particularly of the unskilled or semi-skilled variety. In some developing countries, particularly those lacking adequate resources, tourism may be the only development alternative available in the short to medium term. In this regard, tourism is often identified as a promising growth sector in small island developing States because it offers an important opportunity for economic diversification, particularly for very small islands.

10. In a number of developing countries where tourism development has been given priority in development planning, the contribution of tourism to GNP, employment and export receipts has, in recent years, outstripped traditional economic activities such as cash crop agriculture or mineral extraction. As a result, many developing countries and small island developing States have become more and more dependent on tourism as a major engine for economic development: tourism and tourism-related activities, for instance, now dominate the economies of Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Seychelles. In contrast, island tourism development, in many cases, has had a lesser impact on the economies in most of the African and Pacific small island developing States.

11. The contribution of tourism to income and employment generation can vary significantly between countries. The gross contribution of tourism to national income is diminished by primary leakages of foreign exchange earnings arising from imports of materials and equipment for construction, imports of consumer goods (including food and drink), repatriation of profits earned by foreign investors, overseas promotional expenditures and amortization of external debt incurred in the development of hotels and resorts. In general, income and employment multipliers for tourism tend to be higher in economies where there are well-established local supply networks that ensure that the demands of the tourism sector are more easily met by local suppliers. Where backward linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy are weak or absent, income and employment multipliers from tourism are lower because the potential stimulus to indirect spending is dissipated by increased imports rather than domestic production, as happens with many small island developing States. Given tourism's potential linkages with other economic sectors, its integration into national development plans that highlight the development of intersectoral linkages can encourage the growth of tourism-related activities in the major economic sectors, including agriculture, fishing, industry, services and transportation.

12. However, overreliance on tourism, especially mass tourism, carries significant risks to tourism-dependent economies. Economic recession and the impacts of natural disasters such as tropical storms and cyclones can have devastating effects on the tourism sector. In general, the demand for mass tourism is relatively income-elastic and can produce sharp negative responses to economic downturns in source markets. The recent financial turmoil in Asia, for example, triggered a sharp fall in tourism flows to affected countries during 1997 and 1998. Similarly, excessive reliance on a single major source of tourists, as in Cyprus and Malta on the United Kingdom market, links the performance of the tourism sector to the economic fortunes of the source country.

A. Economic policy challenges for the tourism industry

13. The private tourism sector, which consists of foreign and domestic enterprises, has a crucial role in tourism development through its investment, production, employment and marketing decisions. The foreign tourism industry consists mainly of large transnational airline, hotel and tour companies, and their corporate objectives can have a profound impact on the economic development of destination areas. Therefore, tourism enterprises should ensure that their investment, employment, operational and other business decisions take full account of the wider implications of such actions for the long-term development

and economic sustainability of the destinations in which they operate.

14. Attention to human resources development and training of local workers, for instance, enhances not only the quality of tourism services but also the overall skills and capabilities of the local workforce. In the same way, the utilization of a network of domestic suppliers by foreign tourism businesses can enhance the development and productivity of local suppliers. The development of such linkages can increase the retention of foreign exchange and thereby raise the contribution of tourism to income growth.

15. The domestic tourism sector is largely made up of small and medium-sized tourism firms, which, unlike large firms, are often family-run businesses. These small and medium enterprises face diverse problems and challenges in adapting themselves to new international trends and need to develop strategies based on various market niches and specific segments that enable them to develop new products. When such firms create their own products they can operate on a more cost-effective basis and yet offer more personalized service because of their greater knowledge of their clients' needs, likes and travelling preferences. However, in order to do this, small and medium enterprises require proper planning and market research to redefine and adjust marketing strategies for selling their products. Moreover, those businesses, particularly travel agencies, need to keep abreast of advances in informatics in order to compete successfully with large domestic and foreign tourism enterprises.

B. Economic policy challenges for national Governments

16. In order to advance tourism development, national Governments need to implement policies that will encourage the domestic tourism industry and attract foreign direct investment and relevant technologies. Those policies should ensure that tourism is properly planned and managed so as to minimize its adverse economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts. Therefore, appropriate attention and priority should be attached to tourism in development planning in order to integrate and coordinate tourism policies with the policies of other government agencies so that tourism develops in harmony with overall economic, social and environmental goals. Governments should also consult widely with host communities and concerned major groups to ensure that as broad a range of views as possible is incorporated into the planning process of tourism development. It is also important, in this regard, that Governments undertake capacity-building to promote partnerships and enhance dialogue with all major groups in society.

17. In order to promote tourism and successfully compete with other countries, Governments should ensure that their immigration regulations facilitate the inflow of tourists and people involved in supplying tourism services. In addition, market liberalization and the promotion of consumer (tourist) interests, such as safety and facilitation of travel and the easing of foreign currency regulations, should be key areas of attention for Governments. Indeed, liberalization will lead to greater travel exchange between countries.

18. For most developing countries and economies in transition, foreign direct investment is important for tourism development as it provides an important source of capital, new technologies, organization and management methods and access to markets. Such investment can be attracted and maintained by a stable policy environment that promotes confidence among foreign investors in the economy. To promote the tourism industries, Governments should review the fiscal treatment of the tourism sector and undertake necessary fiscal reform to foster its growth and development. It is also important that Governments develop and apply effective competition policy in the tourism and related sectors by, *inter alia*, prohibiting anti-competitive clauses such as exclusive dealing, import requirements in franchising contracts and the abuse of dominance in air travel.

19. The lack of an adequate tourism infrastructure is a serious obstacle to tourism development in all countries. In particular, the long planning and construction time involved in infrastructure development, as well as the difficulties of funding very costly infrastructure projects, can create critical bottlenecks for international travel and tourism growth. When undertaking the development of major infrastructures, such as road networks or water supply systems, national Governments have to ensure that they cater not only to the needs of the tourism sector, but also to the needs of other industries in the area, as well as to the local community as a whole. Developing countries should consider the various options available for financing tourism infrastructure projects, such as government outlays, financing by multilateral and regional financial institutions, involvement of the private sector through build-operate-transfer schemes and foreign direct investment. The privatization of infrastructure development has been undertaken successfully in a number of developing countries, including Malaysia and Thailand.

20. Given the importance of small and medium enterprises in the tourism industry of both developed and developing countries, it is crucial that policy reforms address this source of entrepreneurial potential. For example, policies should be implemented to promote the access of such enterprises to finance and to strengthen the provision of industrial support services. Moreover, investment policies should encourage linkages among small and medium enterprises. Also, Governments should provide tax incentives and implement deregulation to promote the development and competitiveness of such enterprises in the tourism industry.

21. It is important that the economic benefits of tourism be distributed widely among the host population. One way to do this is to encourage tourism businesses to employ local people and to limit the employment of expatriate labour. In this regard, tourism businesses should be encouraged to train local personnel.

22. Often, employment in the tourism sector is affected by the seasonal pattern of tourism activity that characterizes many destinations that are heavily dependent on tourism: typically there is underutilization of resources (and lower employment opportunities) during the low season and overutilization of resources during the high season. The challenge for national Governments is to identify ways in which tourism activity can be spread more evenly throughout the year. In this regard there is also scope for national Governments to assist tourism organizations of all kinds in assessing and responding to the changing nature of the international demand for tourism, for example by developing alternative forms of tourism.

23. Governments should pay special attention to tourism development and management in coastal areas, which have often relied on tourism as a major source of income and employment. Many such areas are now facing a decline in their established markets. In many instances, a factor contributing to their declining fortunes is poorly planned and poorly managed tourism development in the past, which have impaired the attractiveness of the destination. Coastal tourism is particularly vulnerable in this respect, as it typically involves some of the world's most fragile ecological areas. Since tourism plays a significant role in most small island developing State economies, their national Governments face special challenges to ensure that there is a balance between the heightened demands placed on local resources by tourism and the demands placed upon them by other economic activities and by host communities. To the extent possible, small island developing States and other developing countries should strive to diversify their national economy in order to reduce dependency on tourism as a source of income, employment and foreign exchange earnings.

C. Economic policy challenges for the international community

24. In view of the projected rapid growth in international tourism, there is a need for concerted international action. If the economic benefits of tourism are to be experienced more widely throughout the world, it is important to explore ways to increase participation in international travel, especially by those living in developing countries. This should involve efforts to reduce or even remove tariff-like barriers to international travel. For example, differential exit taxes on residents and visitors serve to discourage foreign travel by residents, while travel allowance restrictions not only discourage foreign travel but also limit residents' spending potential while abroad.

25. Further liberalization commitments on trade in tourism should be negotiated under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and an annex on tourism services may be required, comprising, *inter alia*, regulatory issues such as definitions, competitive safeguards, access to information, fair and transparent use of global distribution systems, linkages between tourism and air transport and security conditions for service contracts. Furthermore, the relevant provisions of GATS should be fully implemented, or, if necessary, new provisions should be developed, to prevent unfair competition arising from discriminatory practices in the issuance of visas to tourists that favour certain tour operators and travel agents. Articles IV and XIX of GATS should be effectively applied to the tourism sector through the adoption of measures that foster greater participation by developing countries in international trade in tourism services. The problems of air access of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, need to be addressed with a view to securing a fair treatment of those countries. Technical assistance should be provided to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, both at the governmental and business levels, in preparing for negotiations in such forums relating to trade and development in tourism and related services.[3]

26. International organizations and donor countries should also increase their efforts in training and capacity-building in the field of tourism in developing countries, including the effective use of computer reservation systems, global distribution systems and the Internet to maximize their earnings from tourism and to meet international standards. Studies should be carried out on specific issues of interest

to developing countries, such as leakages of foreign exchange earnings from the tourism sector, the impact of all-inclusive tours on the financial sustainability of the tourism sector in developing countries and the development of a model strategy for integrating local communities into the formulation, implementation and management of tourism projects.

27. In the area of infrastructure development, the international community already plays an important role by providing funding for tourism-related projects. These funding agencies include, for example, the various World Bank affiliates and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme. Other international organizations, including the World Trade Organization, are often involved as executing agencies for the provision of technical assistance. Multilateral and regional financing institutions should give high priority to appropriate strategies for the environmentally and financially sustainable development of tourism and related sectors, in particular for financing infrastructure projects, the provision of modern telecommunications services under pro-competitive regulatory regimes and human resource development activities.

28. There are problems with the measurement of tourism activity that limit regional and world aggregations and make international comparability difficult: there is no universally accepted definition, although there are internationally recognized definitions of the various categories of tourists. In this regard, national tourism agencies and the statistical offices of all countries should adopt the definitions on tourism statistics as approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1993. In Addition, there is no agreed way of measuring the output from and impacts of tourism and its relationships with other economic sectors. Some progress will be made in this respect when the draft of a tourism satellite account is tabled at the World Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism, to be convened in 1999. Countries should support this initiative, as the acceptance and implementation of a uniform system of tourism accounting measures would provide a clear measurement of the role of the tourism sector in economic development and trade. Such a system could then be used in international negotiations on services, for which adequate statistics and policy analysis are a necessary prerequisite.

III. Tourism and social development

29. International tourism can introduce significant social and cultural change in host destinations. While it is acknowledged that economic development is, in itself, an important change agent in society, the role of tourism has received special attention in this regard largely because of the high visibility of tourists and their direct economic, social and cultural interactions with host communities. Tourism can promote social development through its impact on employment creation, income redistribution and poverty alleviation. Also, the improvements in physical and social infrastructure that usually accompany tourism development often spill over into the rest of the economy, leading to more widespread social improvements, for example, in health and social welfare.

30. At the same time, tourism development can promote negative social and cultural change as a result of economic development or a social demonstration effect when local residents imitate what foreign visitors do, wear and eat. For example, employment that requires shift work can disrupt family life and religious observance. Other negative social costs, such as drug abuse, child labour and prostitution, not only have an impact on the local population, but may also damage the image of the destination itself. However, it is important to note that many negative social changes often attributed to tourism could just as easily have been the result of modernization, in particular the development and diffusion of media and mass communications.

31. In many instances, much of the impact of tourism activity is localized: host communities suffer the effects of overcrowding, pressure on resources and challenges to established culture, including negative changes in the patterns of religious observance, dress, behavioural norms and traditions from interaction with non-indigenous cultures. The intensity of these social impacts depends on factors such as the type and rate of tourism growth, the ratio of visitors to the resident community, seasonal trends and the sociocultural resilience of the host community, but may be magnified in locations where tourist arrival numbers have increased rapidly or where the ratio of tourist arrivals to local population is high. In general, such social costs and pressures may be less onerous when residents actually receive economic and financial benefits from local tourism activity. In the absence of such recompense, host communities may resent and possibly turn hostile towards tourists.

32. A high level of tourism activity can unwittingly encourage over-commercialization, which can cheapen or even destroy local customs and traditions. For instance, when local arts and crafts and cultural practices are adapted to suit foreign tastes, the result can be poor quality handicrafts, unethical trading practices and fake "antiques", as well as the deterioration of cultural dances, music and festivals. Cultural deterioration of a more serious nature may occur when historic sites and buildings are unprotected and the traditionally built environment is replaced or virtually disappears.

33. To mitigate these social and cultural costs, an important consideration in sustainable tourism development is the tourist carrying capacity of host destinations in both environmental and social terms. The concept of carrying capacity should adequately reflect the ability of a local community to absorb tourists without submerging or overwhelming the local culture. This is usually a difficult balance to achieve, but without careful consideration of the sociocultural carrying capacity of a community or area, irretrievable cultural deterioration and loss of cultural patrimony may result; ironically, the very success that national tourism agencies achieve in increasing visitor numbers can actually induce long-term problems that diminish the sustainability of tourist destinations.

34. However, tourism development can help host communities to reclaim their cultural patrimony by providing them with the necessary financial incentives to invest in, promote and preserve their local customs and cultures. With proper management and promotion, local cultures can be given an impetus by the presence of tourists. In many host countries, tourism development has contributed to the revival of native crafts and festivals, which can promote traditional handicraft industries and provide enhanced employment opportunities, particularly for women.

A. Social policy challenges for the tourism industry

35. The major challenge facing the tourism industry is to contribute to social development objectives through greater compliance with core labour standards, attention to worker welfare and human resource development and more corporate social initiatives. Although Governments can and do legislate on matters such as health and safety at work, health insurance and pensions, minimum wages and employment of women and young people, the tourism industry needs to address these issues and take concrete steps, be it in the form of better compliance or voluntary initiatives, to ensure that workers and host communities receive social as well as economic benefits from tourism development. In this regard, the tourism industry needs to ensure that special attention is given to those issues that are specific to or are more pronounced in the tourism sector.

36. Over the past two decades, tourism has become a major source of employment and income in many developing countries. The evidence indicates that in both developed and developing countries, most workers in the tourism industry are in either unskilled or low-skilled jobs, which offer low wages, seasonal employment and irregular working hours. The tourism industry needs to address how working conditions can be improved to provide greater job security and improved human resource development. Clearly, discussion on conditions of work should involve a more direct dialogue between employers and employee representatives, and there should be a greater role for employees in the formulation and implementation of company policies. The private sector and workers' organizations should support the International Labour Organization process of tripartite cooperation as a means of promoting the participation of employers' and workers' organizations.

37. Another significant feature of employment in the tourism sector is the high proportion of women and young people in the workforce. In many situations, women and children can be seriously disadvantaged, discriminated against or exploited in the workplace. In particular, sex tourism, prostitution (with the related problem of HIV/AIDS) and child labour (including the commercial sexual exploitation of children) are issues of serious concern.

38. Tourism enterprises should take steps to put an immediate stop to intolerable forms of child labour. One way to do this is to develop codes of conduct among enterprises in order to prevent child labour and promote compliance with national legislation on child labour. Since poverty is a major factor determining child labour and exploitation, tourism enterprises should support activities that provide employable skills to children at an employable age and to their families, and implement innovative programmes to ensure adequate and full employment of breadwinners. Within their organizations they can also implement responsible tourism marketing and advertisement and create awareness among tourism personnel on the rights of women and children.

39. To its credit, the tourism industry has taken important first steps to confront these serious problems. With regard to child labour and sex tourism, for example, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions launched

a global campaign in 1994 to eliminate child labour, while the International Organization of Employers in 1996 resolved to end slave-like, bonded and dangerous forms of child labour and to develop suitable action plans at the international, national, industry and enterprise levels. In addition, tourist agencies, hotels and air carriers are beginning to take direct action against sex tourism: the Universal Federation of Travel Agents' Associations, for example, has committed itself to combating child sex tourism with the adoption of its Child and Travel Agent Charter in 1994. The World Tourism Organization established the Tourism and Child Prostitution Watch in 1996 to encourage self-regulation in the tourism industry by increasing awareness of the problems of sexual exploitation in tourism and by collecting information on sex tourism and measures that have been successful in stopping it.

40. The tourism industry also has to address the concerns of communities in which they carry out their businesses. Given the potential social and cultural impact of tourism on local populations, particularly in the more remote and isolated locations favoured by the newer forms of tourism such as nature or ecotourism, the private sector needs to invite and nurture host community participation in the tourism development process. Without host community acceptance of the type and scale of tourism, antagonism towards tourists and tourism can threaten overall development and sustainability objectives.

41. Tourism enterprises can also play a useful role in the promotion of education to both tourists and the host community to improve cultural awareness in order to minimize the social impact of tourism. Airlines, for example, have the opportunity, through in-flight videos and publications, to inform passengers about the cultural sensitivities of host communities. Moreover, the tourism industry can play an important role in raising awareness among tourists about the serious issues of child labour, particularly their commercial sexual exploitation. The tourism industry already possesses codes of conduct that provide guidelines for tourism enterprises and host communities, which should be more widely adopted and applied.

B. Social policy challenges for national Governments

42. Governments have an important role in maximizing the benefits of tourism and limiting its negative impacts on society. As such, they have to direct their policies towards development of human resources, alleviation of poverty, improvement of social security, correction of gender and income disparities and promotion of core labour standards. Towards this end, a coordinated policy approach involving Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, host communities and international agencies is necessary to guarantee the achievement of social development objectives through tourism development.

43. The employment created through tourism development can play a significant role in the alleviation of poverty, and government efforts to stimulate employment growth must emphasize the development of linkages between the tourism sector and the local support industries. Since many of the local tourism firms are likely to be small enterprises, Governments should ensure that their policy and regulatory environments support small and medium enterprises by improving their access to markets, sources of information, training and credit. In this regard, due consideration should also be given to providing economic and social opportunities for wider participation and, wherever possible and acceptable, dispersing tourism activities to outlying areas in order to increase rural incomes. Attention should also be directed to the seasonal nature of employment in many tourist destinations with the aim of creating alternative employment opportunities during the low season, including the provision of job security and social safety nets.

44. Among the social problems related to tourism development in developing countries are the lack of indigenous senior managers and the preponderance of low-skilled or unskilled employment in the tourism sector. One way to address these problems is for national Governments to work in partnership with the tourism industry and civil society to strengthen secondary, vocational and advanced education to ensure that the developmental needs of society as well as the specific needs of the tourism sector are met.

45. It is crucial that tourism development planning preserve the legacy, heritage and integrity of tourism destinations and respect the social and cultural norms of society, particularly among the indigenous communities. To this end, there is a need to control the rate of growth of the tourism sector where it may jeopardize local communities and social values. The point of contact between visitor and host is potentially the most important source of negative social and cultural impacts, and it is necessary to try to eradicate potential areas of misunderstanding and friction. Some of the major pressures on the sociocultural fabric of host economies occur when the growth in visitor arrivals is too rapid and when there is unrestricted access to culturally fragile areas. Therefore, there is a significant role for the local community in deciding what it is prepared to offer, how

its cultural patrimony is to be presented and which, if any, aspects of the culture are off-limits to visitors.

46. In this regard, tourism community awareness campaigns are now generally being advocated in tourism development planning to inform people of the benefits to be gained from tourism development. Informing the community should be a continuing process and should be a responsibility of the national tourism agencies, private sector associations and community representatives. In order to stimulate cultural awareness, Governments should work closely with communities and the private sector to ensure that available funding for tourism development is used effectively and efficiently. Therefore, there should be support for greater involvement of communities in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes of tourism policies, programmes and projects. Feelings of alienation and exploitation may arise where local communities are not involved in tourism development planning.

47. Ultimately, community participation has to be linked to community benefits. Without the transference of some of the benefits from tourism to local communities through the creation of jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities and social benefits, efforts to promote community participation may be ineffective. The Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources project in Zimbabwe and the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas project in Zambia are good illustrations of how community involvement in tourism — in this case in anti-poaching activities — has provided financial benefits and incentives to the participating communities while promoting environmentally sustainable tourism. The game management project actively involves local communities in conservation and reinvests money raised from park entry and safari fees in community development and local wildlife management.

48. More needs to be done to spread the lessons and examples of good business practices in the tourism sector and to provide incentives that contribute to social development. Governments should encourage the wider use of voluntary initiatives on the part of industry in both the formal and informal sectors. Indeed, these voluntary initiatives reflect growing corporate recognition and commitment to its social responsibilities.

C. Social policy challenges for the international community

49. The international community faces the challenge of promoting the interests of both host communities and tourists. International cooperation to advance social development objectives in the tourism sector should be built on the foundations established at the World Summit for Social Development and countries' commitments expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.[4] The tourism sector, which is forecast to provide rapid growth in productive employment over the next two decades, can be a major contributor to the achievement of many of these goals for social development if it complies with core standards and other standards related to working conditions, occupational safety and health and social security.

50. At the same time, the international efforts to encourage the observance of these standards should go hand in hand with appropriate technical and financial assistance to countries at lower levels of development that are striving to benefit more fully from rapidly growing tourism. In order to enable these countries to develop competitive tourism sectors without compromising on labour standards, technical cooperation may be required to help tourism firms and small enterprises, particularly in low-income countries, attain this goal.

51. The international community can enhance and strengthen international coordination and monitoring systems through liaison and networking among Governments, the private sector and concerned parties with a view to promoting the positive aspects and minimizing the negative impacts of tourism. In this regard, the Manila Declaration on Social Aspects of Tourism, issued in 1997, will be of great relevance and can provide the basis for international action and cooperation. National Governments, together with the private sector and stakeholders, should be encouraged to work towards the formulation and eventual adoption of a global code of ethics for tourism as recommended in the Manila Declaration. Tourism development in small island developing States and coastal areas should continue to receive special international support. In the case of small island developing States, there should be continued international support for activities pertaining to sustainable tourism under the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States.

52. The international community should further mobilize international support to prevent and control tourism-related abuse and exploitation of people, particularly women and children and other disadvantaged groups. The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996, adopted a programme of action designed to contribute to the global effort to suppress child sex exploitation. In 1997, the Amsterdam Child Labour Conference issued the Amsterdam Declaration, which addressed the most intolerable forms of child labour, while in the same year the International Conference on Child Labour issued the Oslo Declaration, which addressed the issue of practical action to eliminate child labour. Governments, the tourism industry, trade unions and stakeholders should support these international efforts to end such practices in the tourism sector.

IV. Tourism and environmental protection

53. The projected sustained growth of the tourism industry will present serious challenges to environmental protection. In general, the tourism industry produces adverse environmental impacts through its consumption of resources, the pollution and waste generated by the development of tourism infrastructure and facilities, transportation and tourist activities. In the absence of proper planning and management, tourism development can create strong competition for the use of land between tourism and other competing uses, leading to rising prices for land and increased pressure to build on agricultural land. Furthermore, indiscriminate tourism development can encourage intensive or inappropriate use of land, which can cause deforestation, soil erosion and loss of biological diversity. Intensive human interference with vegetation and wildlife through tourism can undermine or destroy traditional activities such as fishing and, perhaps more importantly, cause irreversible damage to valuable ecosystems. The growing market for ecotourism or nature tourism is another area of concern. If not properly planned and managed, such new forms of tourism can threaten the world's most ecologically fragile areas, including parks and natural world heritage sites. Important sustainability considerations also arise from tourism's use of the built environment, for example through "heritage tourism", which can cause, *inter alia*, urban problems such as traffic congestion experienced by many historical city centres.

54. Coastal area development for tourism is an issue of particular concern. The unchecked construction of tourism facilities can despoil the pristine beauty of these areas and erosion from tourism facilities and infrastructures built too close to the coast can contribute to beach destruction and coastal degradation. Practices such as intensive sand mining for tourism-related construction — a feature of many coastal areas — have been responsible for beach destruction; in coastal areas where coral reefs have been destroyed by sewage and other pollution such beach destruction is unlikely to be replenished naturally.

55. The treatment and disposal of liquid and solid wastes generated by the tourism industry is another serious problem, particularly for less developed economies that lack the physical infrastructure or capacity to treat the additional wastes generated by tourism activities. In the Caribbean, the growing frequency of tourist cruise ships is generating increasing volumes of liquid and solid wastes for disposal at the ports of call. Where untreated effluents are disposed into surrounding areas of land and sea, the result often is the pollution of scarce inland freshwater resources, the loss of valuable marine life, the destruction of coral reefs and the silting and erosion of coastal beaches. Pollution from ship-generated wastes is a major concern for small island developing States, where the dumping of oily waste, sewage, garbage and cargo residues by passing cruise and merchant ships can cause marine and beach pollution.

56. Fresh water remains a pressing concern, and the provision of fresh water to meet growing demand from agriculture, industry and households is becoming increasingly difficult in more and more economies. The tourism industry is an extremely intensive user of fresh water and, as the industry expands globally, the problem of freshwater supply is likely to worsen. Moreover, this situation is compounded in many areas where water pollution not only damages tourism sites but also contaminates the freshwater supply. In addition, air pollution is likely to worsen at the local and global levels from increased carbon dioxide emissions related to energy use in tourism-related transportation and in air-conditioning and heating of tourism facilities.

57. Ironically, damage to the environment threatens the very viability of the tourism industry because it depends heavily on the natural environment — its beaches and mountains, rivers, forests and biodiversity — as a basic resource. For example, island tourism is climate-sensitive and is vulnerable to a rise in the sea level that would cause the inundation of coastal and some inland areas, threatening sanitation systems and freshwater supplies. The attractiveness of certain locations as tourist destinations has also been affected by damage to the natural landscape and the loss of biodiversity linked to human activities. Local air

and noise pollution linked to urban congestion can also serve to deter tourists from visiting some destinations.

58. However, tourism can also significantly contribute to environmental protection, the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources. For example, the tourism industry can protect and rehabilitate its natural assets, such as parks, protected areas and cultural and natural sites, by its financial contributions, provision of environmental infrastructure and improved environmental management. Tourism can also help to raise the awareness of the local population to the financial and intrinsic value of natural and cultural sites, motivating communities to reclaim their natural and cultural patrimony through environmental protection and conservation.

A. Environmental policy challenges for the tourism industry

59. The central challenge for the tourism industry is to transform itself, in all its forms, into a sustainable activity by reorienting corporate philosophy, practice and ethics to promote sustainable development through, *inter alia*, better environmental management and practices and close partnerships with Government and civil society.

60. It is vital that the tourism industry involve all stakeholders — customers, staff, trading partners and the host community — in decision-making. To this end, it should develop partnerships with the host community, Governments and their agencies, other private sector companies and international organizations in order to enhance the prospects for bringing about the sustainable development of tourism.

61. Tourism enterprises, both large and small, should integrate environmental management systems and procedures into all aspects of corporate activity in order to reorient their management at all levels towards sustainable development. This fundamental reorientation of management philosophy and practice will necessitate the implementation of, *inter alia*, environmental and social audits, life cycle assessments and training of staff in the principles and practices of sustainable tourism management. In terms of operational changes, tourism enterprises should take all appropriate measures to minimize all forms of waste, conserve energy and freshwater resources and control harmful emissions to the environment. Furthermore, tourism enterprises should plan and manage their operations to minimize the potential environmental impacts from tourism development, such as using local materials and technologies appropriate to local conditions. The tourism industry should promote wider implementation of environmental management, particularly in the many small and medium-sized enterprises that form the backbone of the tourism industry.

62. The tourism industry, by modifying the products it develops and offers the public, can directly influence the nature of tourism itself towards sustainable forms of tourism. In this regard, marketing is an important tool in the tourism industry that should be used to enhance the industry's initiatives for promoting sustainable development by, *inter alia*, raising awareness among their clients of the potential environmental and social impacts of their holidays and of responsible behaviour. The tourism industry is also increasingly interested in eco-labels as a means of promoting their facilities and destinations. But even within existing forms of tourism, businesses in the tourism industry can change their methods of production and delivery to achieve this end. In general, businesses in the tourism sector have a vested interest in maintaining the environmental and sociocultural resources of destination areas that represent their core business assets. Therefore, sustainability of tourism is a challenge to all tourism enterprises, regardless of their size or market orientation, and is not limited to certain niche markets such as ecotourism.

63. An important way in which tourism can achieve the target of sustainability is through self-regulation and voluntary initiatives. In response to the call for action on environmental protection, the tourism industry has developed a number of environmental codes of conduct and voluntary initiatives. In this regard, the environmental guidelines developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is especially relevant for the attainment of sustainability in the tourism industry. Furthermore, a number of innovative programmes and industry awards have been introduced with the aim of promoting and improving environmental management and practices in the tourism industry.

64. WTTC, for example, conducts an environmental management programme for travel and tourism companies and tourism destinations called Green Globe. Launched in 1994, this programme aspires to raise the level of environmental awareness and to provide a low-cost practical means for companies within the industry to undertake improvements in environmental practice. Members of the programme are committed at the chief executive officer level to improving environmental practice in priority action areas through their adherence to Green Globe or equivalent industry guidelines. The programme also bestows annual achievement awards on member companies that demonstrate

outstanding commitment to improving environmental practices. Green Globe members can also earn a certificate of performance based on independent verification of improvements in environmental practice through the Société Générale de Surveillance S.A.

65. Another innovative programme is the International Hotel Environment Initiative (IHEI), established in 1992 by the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum to promote environmental management in the hotel industry. Led by a council of 12 of the top hotel companies in the world, IHEI promotes the business benefits of environmental management within the international hotel community, develops hotel-specific environmental training materials, publishes a quarterly magazine, *Green Hotelier*, dedicated to environmental issues and promotes greater awareness of IHEI "best practice" programmes. A local chapter, the Asia Pacific Hotels Environment Initiative, operates in the Asia-Pacific region. IHEI is developing guidelines for the siting and design of hotels.

66. The Blue Flag programme, which now extends to 18 countries in Europe, was first conceived in France in 1985 as an incentive to protect and improve the quality of beaches and coasts. Under this programme, environmental standards are assessed at individual beaches in Europe by measuring compliance with acceptable concentrations of a range of pollutants on beaches and in marinas to ensure clean bathing water. Beaches are also judged by their compliance with guidelines pertaining to litter management, toilet facilities, life-saving and first-aid equipment, the separation of different recreational activities from each other and from sensitive natural areas, as well as environmental education and activities. Beaches that meet these stringent criteria receive Blue Flag awards that attest to the quality of their maintenance and environmental protection. The success of the programme has inspired the Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization, to extend the award to non-European countries as well.

67. Despite the well-intentioned and noteworthy initiatives of the tourism industry to improve its standards of environmental management and protection, there is plenty of room for additional efforts. In particular, if the codes of conduct and voluntary initiatives are to achieve their full impact on environmental protection, the tourism industry must act to ensure that those instruments are adopted and implemented by all tourism enterprises. Furthermore, these industry initiatives need to be monitored, assessed and reported to reflect their progress in attaining the objectives of sustainable development in general and of environmental protection in particular.

B. Environmental policy challenges for national Governments

68. Governments face the challenge of promoting tourism development in a manner that will maximize the positive influence of tourism on economic and social development as well as environmental objectives, while minimizing its negative impact on the natural environment. An appropriate balance needs to be established between the goals of sustainable tourism development and environmental protection; in particular, the development of sustainable tourism should not impede or diminish sustainability in other sectors of the economy nor, by the same token, should unsustainable practices in related economic sectors (such as agriculture or mineral extraction) limit the potential for tourism to become more sustainable. In order to achieve this, high priority should be assigned to the integration of policies for tourism development with environmental protection. Within this integrated policy framework, it will be necessary for regulatory policies and systems of economic incentives and disincentives to be reviewed to ensure that clear environmental goals and objectives are set for the tourism industry. Policy makers should also address the need for capacity-building as well as environmental monitoring and data collection to support the efforts of the tourism industry and civil society to improve environmental protection.

69. The quest for sustainable tourism will require change on the part of all major groups involved in tourism. Therefore, the overarching objective for national Governments must be to develop policy frameworks that will enable and encourage those changes. In this regard, an important area of action for Governments is to develop national strategies or master plans for tourism that will provide focus and direction to all stakeholders. These strategies and master plans need to be complemented and supported by appropriate regulatory mechanisms and tools to deal with environmental assessment, building regulations and environmental standards for tourism. Governments should ensure that all environmental regulations and environmental policy measures are applied to all businesses in the tourism sector, regardless of size or type of tourism activity. It is important that all Governments that have not already done so give due consideration to the ratification and implementation of international and regional environmental conventions, particularly those relating to tourism activities.

70. Tourism, in particular mass tourism, should be regulated and, where necessary, prohibited in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas. Also, in protected areas and where nature is particularly diverse, vulnerable and attractive, tourism should be permitted only when it meets the requirements of nature protection and biological diversity conservation. In coastal areas where tourism can impose serious environmental damage, Governments should fully implement the principles of integrated coastal area management. Environmental impact studies are an important tool for sustainable development and should be undertaken in the preoperative stage. However, where tourism activities can contribute to environmental conservation, they should be encouraged and promoted.

71. The continued strong growth in tourism is expected to increase the volume of travel related to tourism in all forms. A major environmental implication of this trend is that, if unchecked, it will lead to increases in the level of emissions, waste and pollution resulting from tourism-related transportation. In particular, Governments should pay special attention to negative environmental impacts of road and air traffic and take steps to ensure that tourism development incorporates environmentally friendly modes of transport. In this regard, a mix of economic, technological and management approaches may be useful. For instance, consumption patterns can be influenced through appropriate marketing, pricing and consumer education, or new forms of tourism can be developed.

72. The use of economic instruments to promote sustainable tourism should be extended further. It is clear that environmental performance in the tourism industry can be improved by a judicious mix of instruments, comprising both incentives and direct regulation, that facilitate innovation and complement economic policies. In general, existing economic incentives that encourage environmentally unfriendly activities should be removed. The full costing and pricing of energy and water, in particular, can promote eco-efficiency in the tourism industry as well as provide additional revenue that can be used to support improved management of those resources. In this regard, the user-pays principle is appropriate and should be more widely applied and supported. The role of the banking and insurance sectors in sustainable tourism should be developed and encouraged. In particular, banks and insurance companies can promote sustainable tourism by advocating policies that incorporate environmental and social criteria into assessment procedures for loans, investments and insurance. They could help finance environmentally sound technologies and provide incentives for sustainable tourism.

73. The promotion of partnerships among all stakeholders is vital to the attainment of sustainable tourism, and Governments can play an important role by encouraging, supporting and facilitating the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders, especially indigenous and local communities, in the planning, development and management of tourism. The development of such participatory approaches can also encourage and promote responsible practices among businesses, host communities and tourists, for example, through the development of codes of conduct, guidelines and voluntary initiatives in support of sustainable development.

74. It is important to raise public awareness about sustainable tourism and to encourage more responsible behaviour. Often, if tourists are given opportunities to learn about the culture and environment of the host community prior to their visit, they behave more responsibly. Local communities and businesses also benefit from awareness-raising activities that alert them to the environmental impact of their activities and interactions with tourists. It is important, therefore, to ensure that sustainability issues are fully integrated into courses at all levels of education in order to develop environmental awareness and the skills required to promote sustainable tourism. In order to ensure that sustainable tourism becomes the concern of the whole industry, it is necessary for Governments to work in partnership with the tourism industry to develop training programmes and networks to exchange training materials dealing with environmental protection. In addition, non-governmental organizations have made important contributions to raising community awareness of environmental and sustainability issues, and such activities should be supported.

75. In view of the fact that many tourism activities and their impacts are highly localized, it is necessary to promote capacity-building among local government entities. Already, in many countries local governments have important responsibilities for tourism development and management, and capacity-building programmes will enable them to better understand these responsibilities with respect to sustainable tourism.

76. There is a need to improve the monitoring and reporting of industry's progress towards the objective of sustainable tourism. The Government should encourage the tourism industry to use participatory approaches involving all stakeholders to develop the monitoring and public reporting of its activities, particularly with regard to their compliance with unenforceable codes of conduct and voluntary initiatives. At the same time, local and central governments should enhance their capacity to monitor the

performance of the tourism industry and to develop suitable indicators that can be used in their decision-making.

77. Governments should fully support and promote the voluntary initiatives of the tourism industry and encourage the dissemination of best practices within the business and local community. Incentives, including the award of prizes, certificates and eco-labels for sustainable tourism, should be used to encourage the private sector to meet its responsibilities for achieving sustainable tourism. The success of the Blue Flag programme in Europe is a good example of the practical contribution of such an approach.

C. Environmental policy challenges for the international community

78. The major challenge facing the international community is to assist Governments, especially those of developing countries, to promote tourism development within the framework of sustainable development in order to maximize the potential economic and social benefits from tourism without damaging the environment or cultural assets.

79. The predicted growth in international tourism raises fresh concerns about the impact of tourism development on the environment. In the absence of adequate measures, it is likely that the projected increase in the volume of international tourism will generate outcomes, such as increases in air, sea and land transportation, that can harm the environment. Thus, the major challenges facing the international community are to deal with the negative transboundary and global impacts of tourism on the environment and to support the efforts of countries, particularly developing countries, to improve the environmental sustainability of their tourism industries at the national level. Therefore, policy coordination and cooperation at the international level is needed to address the global environmental impacts of tourism, as well as issues of biological diversity, coastal area management and ecotourism.

80. The international community has already taken important steps through the development of international, regional and multilateral agreements and guidelines that address the issue of sustainable tourism. However, these now need to be effectively translated into practical programmes for implementation by the tourism industry, Governments and civil society. Of particular importance to the environmental sustainability of tourism are the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism, the Malé Declaration on Sustainable Tourism Development, the Declaration of San José, the Charter for Sustainable Tourism, the World Heritage Convention and *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry*.[5] Furthermore, at the regional level, it is important to take account of the recommendations on the sustainable development of tourism in the eastern African States and the Council of Europe's recommendations on a general policy for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism development. In addition, there is ongoing work to develop global guidelines on biological diversity and sustainable tourism in the Convention on Biological Diversity, and principles for the implementation of sustainable tourism in UNEP. In this regard, the international community has an important role to play in developing a set of internationally recognized reporting standards as well as external monitoring and accreditation systems for assessing the sustainability of tourism services.

81. The international community also has an important role in assisting developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, economies in transition and small island developing States, through the provision of financial and technical assistance to governments at all levels, to develop a range of meaningful and effective planning guidelines, codes of good practice, regulatory frameworks and policy provisions aimed at achieving sustainable tourism. Such assistance is crucial, *inter alia*, for the development of integrated national tourism policies and master plans, capacity-building, development of tourism infrastructure and the promotion of sustainable planning and management of tourism. It should also be used to develop techniques and frameworks for assessing the environmental and social impacts of tourism at the national, regional and local levels, and to promote the use of integrated environmental management and social responsibility programmes for sustainable tourism. At the same time, the international community should support the development of inventories of tourism activities and attractions that take into account the impact of tourism on ecosystems and biological diversity. In this regard, technical and scientific cooperation should be established through the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biodiversity.

82. A further challenge for the international community is to help countries, especially developing countries, to progressively raise environmental standards and to adopt technologies that enhance environmental protection without unduly reducing the international competitive position of tourism enterprises. In this regard, tourism activities that employ environmentally sound technologies to save water and energy, prevent pollution, treat waste water, minimize solid waste production and encourage recycling should be

promoted to the fullest extent. Similarly, tourism activities that encourage the use of public and non-motorized transport should be supported. The international community will have to strengthen development cooperation to make tourism development more environmentally sustainable, while emphasizing financial support and measures to accelerate the transfer of environmentally sound technology. Steps should be taken to facilitate the international exchange of information, experience and technical skills, especially between the developed and developing countries.

83. Regional cooperation is an important modality for promoting the development of sustainable tourism and should be supported because it opens up opportunities for regional collaboration in such areas as tourism development planning, market development and promotion, strengthening and expansion of the roles of national and regional tourism institutions and organs and training and manpower development. In recent years, various efforts have been made to forge common regional approaches to the promotion of sustainable tourism development. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has endorsed a plan of action for sustainable tourism development in the Asia and Pacific region. The Tourism Council of the South Pacific has been successful as a regional agency in the area of marketing and promotion of the South Pacific as a tourist destination, while for the Caribbean small island developing States, the formation of the Caribbean Coalition for Tourism has pooled resources for cooperative marketing.

84. International organizations, in particular UNEP and the World Tourism Organization, have been important in promoting action to deal with the environmental impacts of tourism and to promote sustainable tourism. UNEP has developed fruitful partnerships with industry associations at the international level to provide information about and disseminate examples of good environmental practices, in particular on codes of conduct and environment management of hotels. In 1997, the World Trade Organization convened the Asia-Pacific Ministers' Conference on Tourism and Environment and the World Tourism Leaders' Meeting on the Social Impacts of Tourism. The international community should support the programmes and initiatives of such international organizations designed to promote sustainable tourism.

85. Finally, with regard to the International Year of Ecotourism in 2002, the Commission on Sustainable Development has been requested to recommend to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, supportive measures and activities that will contribute to a successful year (Council resolution 1998/40, para. 3). In order to fulfil this request, it will be necessary for the Commission to initiate and facilitate consultations to discuss the measures and activities that may be undertaken in 2002. The international community and all major groups should fully support and participate in this process to ensure that the event will achieve all its objectives. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998, has also proclaimed the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains, the Commission for Sustainable Development may wish to consider possibilities for linking some of the activities of the two years.

Notes

[1] World Tourism Organization, *Tourism Highlights 1997* (Madrid, 1998).

[2] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "International trade in tourism-related services: issues and options for developing countries" (TD/B/COM.1/EM.6/2).

[3] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Report of the Expert Meeting on Strengthening the Capacity for Expanding the Tourism Sector in Developing Countries, with Particular Focus on Tour Operators, Travel Agencies and Other Suppliers (TD/B/COM.1/17–TD/B/COM.1/EM.6/3).

[4] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[5] World Tourism Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council and Earth Council, *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry* (1997).